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2 June 1954

Copy No. 21
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WEEKLY INDOCHINA REPORT

Document No. <u>4</u>
No Change In Class. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Declassified
Class. Changed To: TS S C
Auth.: HR 70-2
Date: <u>14 July 78</u> By: <u></u>

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DIA review(s)
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SUMMARY

Indochina

Military: During the past week an increasing number of observers in Indochina, both American and French, have become convinced that the Viet Minh will launch a large-scale military attack on the Tonkin delta, possibly as early as mid-June.

General Cogny, French commander in Tonkin, has told the American army attaché that he expects a full-scale attack between 15 and 20 June.

Cogny has intimated that he might not be able to hold Hanoi and might be forced to withdraw to a bridgehead at Haiphong. He fears the Viet Minh will be able to isolate Hanoi, cut off its supplies, and thus make it untenable.

The French are nevertheless making significant additions to their strength in the delta, are regrouping to expand their mobile strength, and say they will try to hold the entire delta.

Political: Measures currently contemplated by top French and Vietnamese officials with a view to offsetting political disintegration in Vietnam reveal little tendency, even at this late date, to plan boldly and break cleanly with formulas which have proved utterly ineffectual in the past.

Bao Dai is now seriously considering the replacement of his present premier, Buu Loc, by the prominent Catholic layman, Ngo Dinh Diem. The latter, described by American officials as an "honest mystic," has built his reputation largely on his refusal to accept any public office inconsistent with his conception of his own importance.

Although Diem's personal integrity, his important family connections and his appeal to the Catholic population make him a figure to be reckoned with in Vietnamese politics, his qualifications as helmsman of the sinking Vietnamese ship of state are highly doubtful. The mere prospect of becoming premier has reduced him to an almost incoherent state.

Bao Dai's consideration of him for high office is paradoxical in view of the long-standing enmity between the two men and may reflect an intention on Bao Dai's part to play off one politician against another or a decision to cast Diem in the role of scapegoat.

The Vietnamese are pleading for assurances of American support, regardless of what the French may do.

Geneva Conference

The Communists seemed to be pursuing the same objectives during the second week of the conference that they did during the first.

They appeared to be thinking in terms of two or perhaps three types of settlements:

- (1) The most ambitious, the 10 May proposal for a cease-fire followed by a political settlement involving the withdrawal of foreign forces, formation of committees to carry out elections, and establishment of unified governments in all three states.
- (2) A more modest settlement based on a cease-fire and the regrouping of forces in such a way as to be tantamount to partition of the three states, but without any formal political agreement.
- (3) Possibly a cease-fire and partition in Vietnam alone.

The Communists are expected to press to the limit for acceptance of their maximum demands before moving to the second position, and they may not be prepared under any circumstances to move to the third.

The Vietnamese delegate has been quick to oppose any cease-fire plan which would result in partition, even a "temporary" partition. The division of Korea was originally called "temporary" and still is, the delegate noted.

The Laotians and Cambodians accepted a British proposal calling, among other things, for simultaneous cease-fires in all three Associated States and a regrouping of forces, but did so on the understanding that regrouping would be applied only in Vietnam.

The French also agreed to the British proposal, thereby abandoning their previous insistence on the withdrawal of Viet Minh forces from Laos and Cambodia as a precondition for a cease-fire.

The British, in putting forward their proposal of 29 May, showed once again their willingness to utilize expedients in their efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement.

They are not known to have indicated any reservations they might have about agreements reached under the terms of their proposal. They have presumably decided to express no position on the outlines of a settlement until Communist intentions become clear.

Under Secretary Smith told British Foreign Secretary Eden prior to the 29 May session that the United States would have to make its position clear on certain reservations of principle relating to the British proposal. When Smith raised the subject later in the session, both Eden and his aide, Lord Reading, gave, in Smith's words, a "startling public exhibition of impatience and pique," including an irate aside by Reading, audible throughout the room, to the effect that the United Kingdom should withdraw its proposal.

Free World Policies and Opinions

France: The next ten days will be extremely critical for the French positions in both Europe and Southeast Asia.

The Laniel government, in office now only by virtue of a skin-of-the-teeth majority of two votes in the National Assembly, may face a new vote in the assembly at any time beginning 8 June.

The resignation of Marc Jacquet, secretary for the Associated States, and the refusal of the Gaullists to permit another of their deputies to replace him, further emphasizes the cabinet split on Indochina.

The Socialist Congress on 29-30 May was careful to point out that the endorsement it voted of EDC did not imply any change in Socialist opposition to the government's Indochina policy.

The cabinet on 29 May approved measures to reinforce the expeditionary force in Indochina. Among other things, it decided to call up immediately the 80,000 draftees who would normally have been called up in October. The French say they will use these men to replace volunteers and professional soldiers who will be sent to Indochina.

West Germany: The West German press, itself divided on the Indochina problem, voiced concern over what it took to be signs of a split between the United States and Britain on the question and called for Western unity at Geneva.

It also called for an end to "illegal" French Foreign Legion recruiting practices in West Germany.

Australia and New Zealand: The return of the Menzies government to power means that there will probably be no break in the continuity of the Australian policy of working closely with the United States and Britain.

The New Zealand press gave American policy in Southeast Asia a hard time, contrasting the "wild statements" demanding "precipitate action" which it said emanated from some American quarters with the "appreciation of realities" it attributed to Britain.

Egypt: Two officers high in the Nasr regime told an American diplomat that events in Southeast Asia are having strong repercussions in Egypt and that the tide of neutralist sentiment there is rising.

India: No reaction has yet been reported from New Delhi to Gromyko's proposal of 31 May to include India on a truce supervisory team. There is little doubt, however, that India would participate if also asked to do so by the West.

There were indications of increasing concern over Communist gains in Southeast Asia.

Pakistan: Karachi's current preoccupation with the East Bengal problem will probably prevent it from taking an active part in Indochina affairs for some time to come.

Ceylon: The question of Ceylonese participation in an Indochina settlement is probably academic, according to the American ambassador in Colombo.

Burma: The Burmese are moving toward a more realistic understanding of the Communist threat, but are doing so at a pace so slow as to be hardly perceptible to the naked eye. The government still stands by its policy of "neutrality."

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Indonesia: Prime Minister Ali told Ambassador Cumming that American efforts to muster strength to deter Communist China's expansion "could only lead to war." The only solution lies in a modification of the American attitude toward Peiping, Ali said; if admitted to the UN, the Chinese Communists could be handled without danger of war.

Philippines: President Magsaysay, for the prestige involved, has asked that the Philippines be invited to take part in the staff discussions opening in Washington on 3 June, even if it is to be the only Asian nation participating. The request stems from the president's fight with Senator Recto, with whom a break is "expected hourly," according to the president.

Carlos Romulo called on President Eisenhower to meet with Southeast Asian leaders to draw up a Southeast Asian declaration similar to the Atlantic Charter.

Thailand:

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the Thais pressed ahead with plans for their appeal to the UN.

Japan: Deputy Prime Minister Ogata told a press conference that the Communists will become more active in Japan if the situation in Asia deteriorates further. He warned that Communist strategy will be influenced by the extent to which the free world co-operates with Japan.

South Korea: President Rhee plans to reschedule the Chinhae anti-Communist conference for 15 June. He will undoubtedly try to use the conference to support his efforts to be included in the program for collective action in Southeast Asia proposed by the United States.

* * *

INDOCHINA

Military

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General Cogny, French commander in Tonkin, told the American army attaché in late May he expects a full-scale attack between 15 and 20 June. The consensus of the American intelligence representatives in Saigon supports his view.

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The French say they have decided to try to hold the entire Tonkin delta and are regrouping their forces to provide a larger mobile reserve. The regrouping thus far has involved the abandonment of an unreported number of isolated watchtowers, concrete outposts and blockhouses, chiefly west and south of Hanoi. Concurrently with the addition of these garrisons to the mobile forces, between 10 and 13 battalions are being transferred from Laos to the delta.

These planned increases for the near future will bring French mobile infantry strength in the delta to about 36 battalions, or slightly more than double the number of mobile battalions there during the Dien Bien Phu battle. Total French regular strength in the delta amounts to 45 infantry and 14 artillery battalions and 56 Vietnamese infantry and two artillery battalions.

The American service attachés in Saigon reported on 31 May, just after a tour of the delta, that military and civilian officials there believe that under an all-out Communist attack, the delta, except for the Haiphong area, would be lost in 30 days. According to many observers, French chances for a successful defense of the delta will depend largely on how well the 58 Vietnamese battalions fight. Opinion varies on the dependability of these units.

Cogny, himself, is reported rather pessimistic over the chances of holding Hanoi and is concerned that the Communists might concentrate on cutting the Hanoi-Haiphong lines of communication. He fears he would be unable to prevent such an effort and says he does not "intend to have another Dien Bien Phu" at Hanoi. Instead, he would withdraw to a bridgehead at Haiphong.

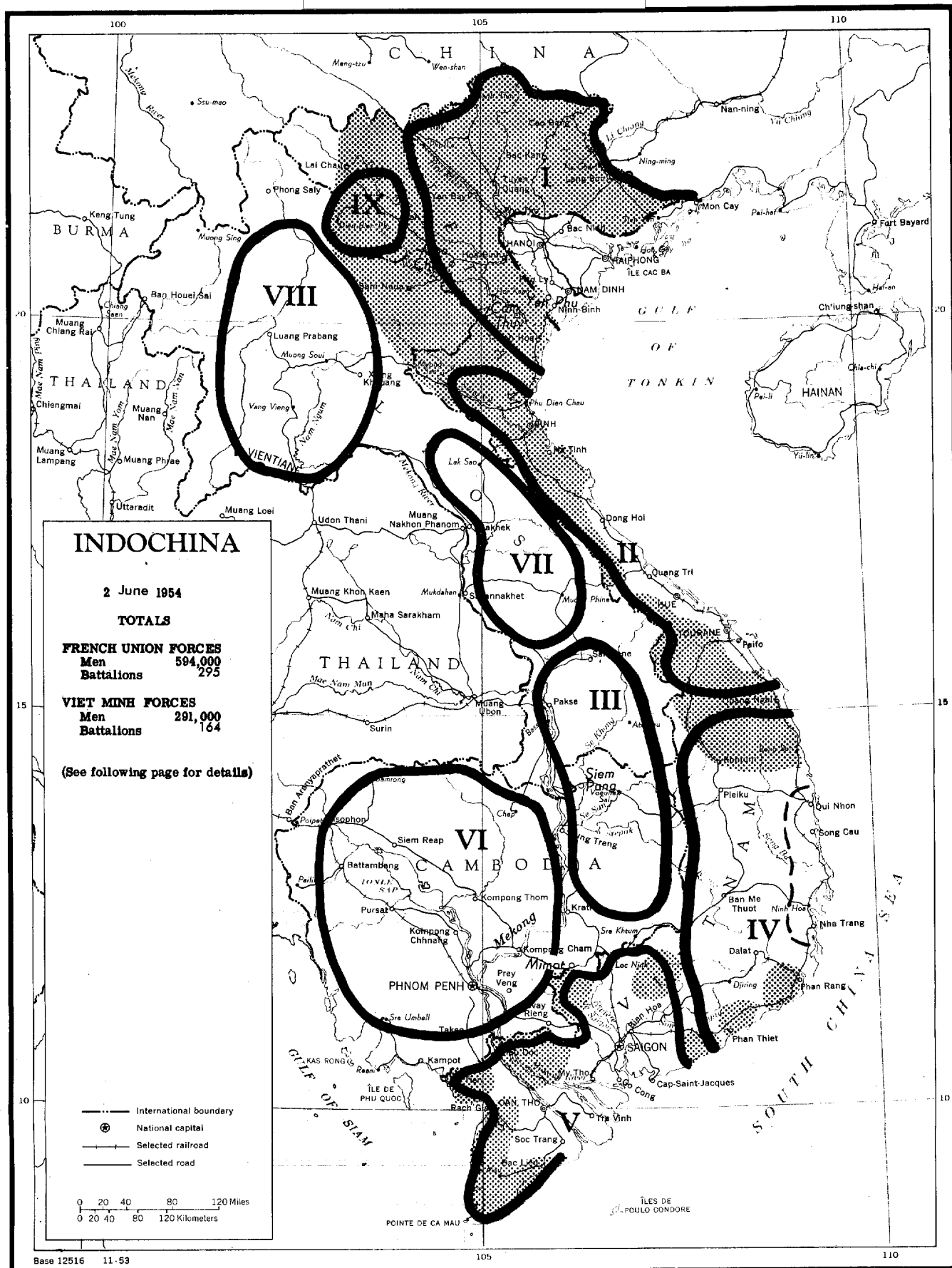
In this connection, the American chargé reported that Hanoi is low on rice stocks and is dependent on a daily supply of coal to operate its electric power and water purification plants. He feels that Hanoi would fall if this supply were cut off.

The American army attaché believes Viet Minh strategy may call for an acceleration of pressure on the Hanoi-Haiphong line by the commitment of its battle corps piecemeal, gradually bringing movement of traffic to an end without risking attack by French planes in a head-on collision with heavier armed French forces.

The heaviest fighting of the past week in Indochina occurred south of Hanoi, where a French clearing operation drove off Communist troops surrounding Yen Phu and captured a large number of Viet Minh mines and light weapons.

Laos: The proposed transfer of most of the French Union battalions from Laos to Tonkin will, for all practical purposes, turn over the defense of Laos to the 13 battalions of the weak Laotian army and expose the situation in that country to rapid deterioration. Some ten Viet Minh battalions are now in Laos. Any expansion of Communist military activity probably would result in a disproportionate decrease in security; there are few indications, however, that the Viet Minh is currently planning to send additional forces into Laos.

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FRENCH UNION FORCES					VIET MINH FORCES			
FRENCH	ASSOCIATED	TOTAL	COMBAT STRENGTH	AREA	REGULARS	REGIONAL	TOTAL	COMBAT STRENGTH
45 Inf Bns 14 Arty Bns	28 Inf Bns 2 Arty Bns 28 Lt Bns 3 Guard	73 Inf Bns 16 Arty Bns 28 Lt Bns 3 Guard	95,900	I	63 Inf Bns 6 Arty Bns	27 Inf Bns	90 Inf Bns 6 Arty Bns	67,200
5 Inf Bns 2 Arty Bns	9 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns 7 Lt Bns 8 Guard	14 Inf Bns 2 Arty Bns 7 Lt Bns 8 Guard	25,500	II	4 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns	6 Inf Bns	10 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns	7,000
3 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns	7 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns 2 Lt Bns	10 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns 2 Lt Bns	11,500	III	4 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns	0 Inf Bns	4 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns	2,800
6 Inf Bns 1 Arty Bn	15 Inf Bns 3 Arty Bns 14 Lt Bns 8 Guard	21 Inf Bns 4 Arty Bns 14 Lt Bns 8 Guard	37,500	IV	15 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns	3 Inf Bns	18 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns	12,600
6 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns	12 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns 29 Lt Bns	18 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns 29 Lt Bns	18,600	V	10 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns	2 Inf Bns	12 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns	8,400
0 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns	6 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns 3 Lt Bns	6 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns 3 Lt Bns	7,300	VI	0 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns	1 Inf Bn	1 Inf Bn 0 Arty Bns	1,000
8 Inf Bns 1 Arty Bn	1 Inf Bn 0 Arty Bns 2 Lt Bns	9 Inf Bns 1 Arty Bn 2 Lt Bn	10,000	VII	4 Inf Bns 1 Arty Bns	0 Inf Bns	4 Inf Bns 1 Arty Bn	3,500
7 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns	5 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns 3 Lt Bns	12 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns 3 Lt Bns	12,700	VIII	4 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns	0 Inf Bns	4 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns	2,800
—	—	—	—	IX	7 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns	7 Inf Bns	14 Inf Bns 0 Arty Bns	9,800

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INDOCHINA

Political

Vietnam: Measures currently contemplated by top Vietnamese and French officials with a view to off-setting political disintegration in Vietnam reveal little tendency, even at this late date, to plan boldly and break cleanly with formulas which have proved utterly ineffectual in the past.

Bao Dai is now seriously considering the replacement of his present premier, Buu Loc, by the prominent Catholic layman, Ngo Dinh Diem. The latter, described by American officials as an "honest mystic," has built his reputation largely on his refusal to accept any public office inconsistent with his conception of his own importance.

Although Diem's personal integrity, his important family connections, and his appeal to the Catholic population make him a figure to be reckoned with in Vietnamese politics, his qualifications as helmsman of the sinking Vietnamese ship are highly doubtful. The mere prospect of becoming premier has, according to the American embassy in Paris, reduced him to an almost incoherent state.

Bao Dai's consideration of Diem for high office is paradoxical in view of the long-standing enmity between the two men and may reflect an intention on Bao Dai's part to play off one politician against another or a decision to cast Diem in the role of scapegoat.

Diem has stated that as premier his first act would be to fire "that imitation Frenchman," Chief of Staff Nguyen Van Hinh. Although such a move would be a constructive one in view of Hinh's apparent willingness to put his own dictatorial aspirations above the territorial integrity of Vietnam, Diem's elevation might

also cost Vietnam some of its ablest men. Governor Tri of north Vietnam is said to believe he could not continue in office if Diem came to power. The American consul in Hanoi comments it would be difficult to find a more unpropitious time to change teams in north Vietnam.

On balance, there is no reason to believe that the "Yogi-like" and inexperienced Diem could deal with Vietnam's manifold problems more effectively than the subtle and sophisticated Buu Loc.

Commissioner General Dejean agrees that Diem's appointment would provide no solution for the current crisis. Dejean's solution, however, calls for Bao Dai as his own premier, with three vice premiers under him. For the latter positions Dejean specifically named three of the most unpopular men in Vietnam, each of whom is a naturalized French citizen and each of whom participated in the ill-fated French attempt in 1946 to dismember Vietnam by setting up a "Cochinchina Republic."

The most resolute leadership continues to be provided by the northern Vietnamese, Governor Tri and Defense Minister Phan Huy Quat. The American chargé reports, however, that statements made to him in Hanoi two days ago by Tri and the Vietnamese bishop of Buichu reflect a "mounting sense of panic and a feeling that the last act is about to open."

Both Vietnamese leaders emphasized that defeatism is increasing among the populace of Tonkin. The bishop, who exercises temporal as well as spiritual power over much of the population of the southern part of the delta, reported that the Viet Minh is making headway in his solidly Catholic region. He attributed this as much to "our side's wrong policies" as to Viet Minh force of arms.

Tri and Quat are continuing to work closely with American officials toward the formation of an enlarged and freshly equipped Tonkin militia. The principal obstacle is lack of funds-

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A plea for assurances of American support regardless of what the French may do is one of the two major themes in Vietnamese foreign policy. The other is insistence that the French formally put their seal on the much-delayed independence treaty with Vietnam.

The latest reports are that the negotiation of certain supplementary economic and military conventions, which the French have made a precondition to signature of the basic independence treaty, has now been virtually suspended pending the outcome of the Geneva conference. This delay is not only harmful in destroying whatever morale value might lie in a clear affirmation of Vietnamese independence, but it also needlessly immobilizes in Paris many high officials of the Vietnam government.

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GENEVA CONFERENCE

The positions taken by the Communists during the second week of restricted sessions on Indochina were logical developments of their first week's positions. As presented last week, these positions had left almost totally obscure the proposed relationship between a cease-fire and a political settlement.

The Communists in the first session on 17 May agreed to take up the military dimension of the Indochina question before discussing the political aspects. In the second session the Viet Minh delegate insisted that the same military and political problems obtain throughout Indochina and demanded a simultaneous cease-fire in the three states, followed by a political settlement providing for unified governments in each.

In private conversations on 20 May, Molotov and Chou En-lai told Eden that cease-fire proposals might be considered first, with political settlements for the three states to be examined later.

In the fourth session on 21 May, Molotov proposed that the conference determine what general principles for a cease-fire would be applicable to all three of the Associated States, and suggested for discussion the questions of:

- (1) Establishment of zones for regrouping forces.
- (2) Nonintroduction of foreign troops or arms.
- (3) Supervision of the cease-fire.
- (4) Guarantees.

On 24 May Molotov, backed by Chou and the Viet Minh spokesman, insisted on the inseparability of military and political questions and recommended direct French-Viet Minh contacts in the field and at Geneva.

These various pronouncements were the bones of the Communist proposals which shaped up during the second week.

The Viet Minh Proposal

In the sixth restricted session on 25 May, the Viet Minh delegate offered a plan for an immediate cease-fire based on a readjustment of areas of control and involving an exchange of territory.

A Viet Minh broadcast specified this would be an "exchange of territories of an equivalent value from the point of view of area, population, and economic and political interests."

The Viet Minh delegate stated explicitly that each side would receive its territory "in one piece," although this part of the proposal was reported questioned by other Communist sources at Geneva.

The Viet Minh spokesman also said arrangements must be made for Laos and Cambodia. The Viet Minh radio later specified that the Communists proposed that "zones be established in all three states." The spokesman urged that the commanders of both sides meet and make recommendations on armistice terms.

Soviet and Chinese Communist propaganda began immediately to endorse the 25 May proposal. Both emphasized that the Communist ghost governments in "Pathet Lao and Khmer" (Laos and Cambodia) would have to be accepted as substantial entities if the negotiations were to move forward. Peiping said, for example, that the peoples of the three states have a "common vital interest" in peace and the question of a settlement is an "integral matter" which "cannot be separated by artificial means."

Prior to 25 May, Communist claims as to the territory held by their three "governments" in Indochina--held actually by Viet Minh forces--had been surmised from a recent Chinese Communist map reprinted by the Soviet New Times on 15 May (see map, p. 23). This map shows the Communists in control of most of Vietnam, about half of Laos, and parts of Cambodia.

On 25 May Peiping radio asserted that "in Pathet Lao half the territory and a million people have been liberated; in Khmer the liberation area is expanding...." On 27 May a Viet Minh broadcast claimed Communist control over "more than one half of the territory and nearly 50 percent of the total population" in Laos, made no territorial claim for Cambodia, but asked that representatives of both regimes participate in the Geneva discussions.

French-Viet Minh Talks in the Field

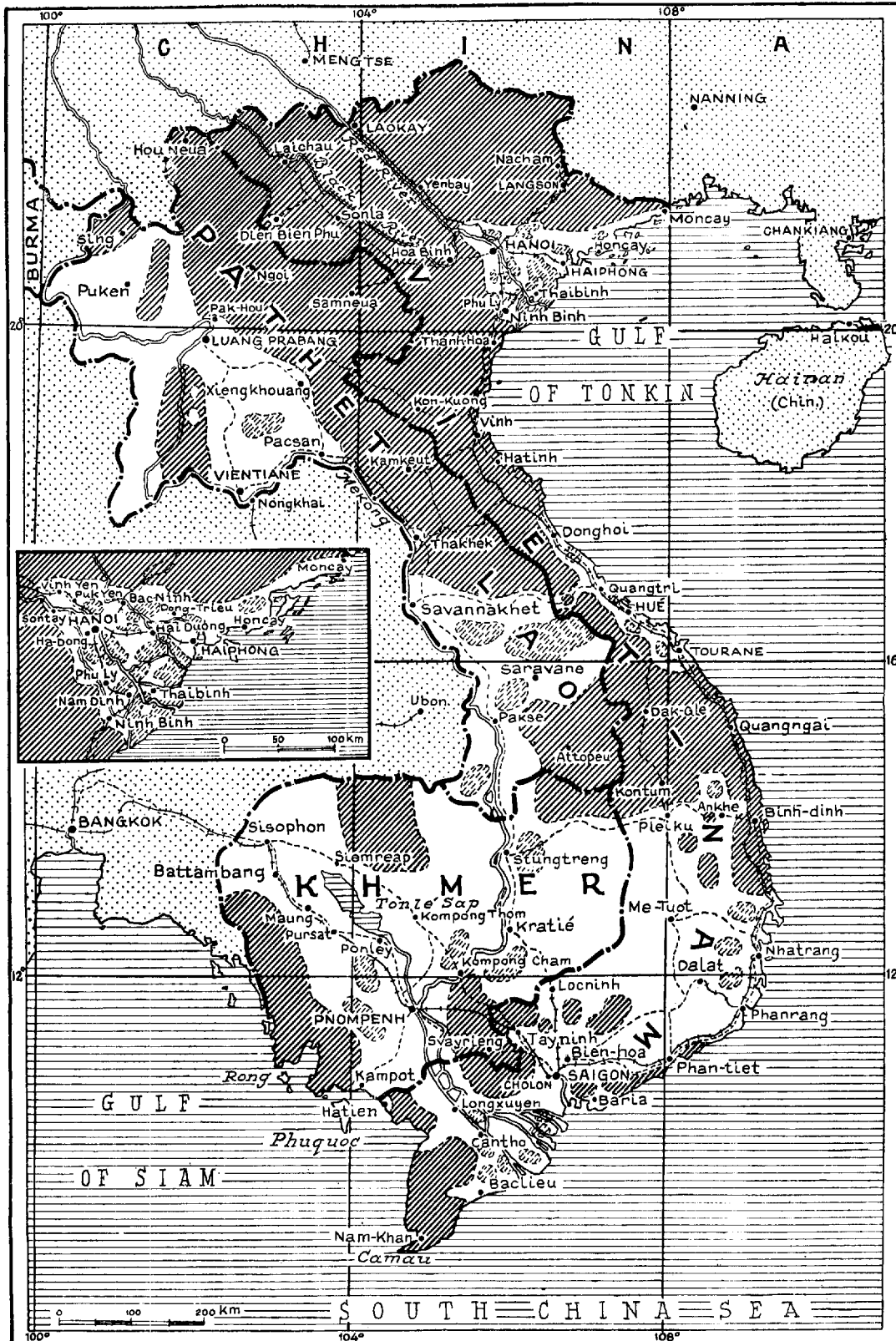
The French told American representatives at Geneva on 26 May that their talks in the field with the Viet Minh about the Dien Bien Phu wounded were continuing, that the Communists were being unexpectedly reasonable, and that the Viet Minh representatives had repeatedly indicated their readiness to broaden the discussions. At the same time, Moscow radio, in endorsing the principle of direct French-Viet Minh talks, emphasized that such talks could contribute not only to a cease-fire but to "all other questions considered by the conference." This line may have been directed to the conference alone, but it may also have been in preparation for moving the talks to the field--along the lines of the Korean talks at Panmunjom--if the Geneva conference breaks down.

The Chinese Communist Proposal

In the seventh restricted session on 27 May, Chou En-lai clarified the Communist position with a six-point proposal, noting that he envisaged an agreement on principles followed by discussion on concrete application. Chou called for:

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Indo-China



Map from Shitse Chihshih magazine (China), No. 6, March 20, 1954

- (1) A simultaneous cease-fire throughout Indochina.
- (2) Regrouping of military forces in all three states.
- (3) Contact between commanders at Geneva and in the field to determine the zones for regrouping "and other matters."
- (4) Preventing the introduction of troops and materiel after a cease-fire.
- (5) Supervision of the truce by joint committees of the belligerents, supervised in turn by a neutral nations supervisory committee.
- (6) Guarantees of the truce by all states represented at Geneva, with consultation rather than individual action in the event of truce violations.

At this 27 May session, the British and American delegations tried to induce Molotov to agree to either the British or French proposals relating to a cease-fire. Molotov refused, in the absence of an indication that there would be a regrouping of forces in Laos and Cambodia as well as in Vietnam.

The Moscow, Peiping and Viet Minh radios, endorsing Chou En-lai's version of the Communist position, alike emphasized that Laos and Cambodia must be included in a cease-fire agreement. Peiping put it this way: "What kind of cease-fire is wanted? A genuine, speedy and complete cease-fire for the whole of Indochina? Or a temporary cease-fire in one place (which would permit) intensified fighting to break out in another?"

The 29 May Agreement

A drafting committee met on 28 May to consider the British, French and Chinese Communist proposals but could find no basis for agreement and referred the matter to the eighth restricted session on 29 May. This session concluded with an agreement on an amended British proposal, after Molotov had rebuked the Viet Minh delegate for trying to introduce other issues.

The agreed statement proposed that, to facilitate "early and simultaneous cessation of hostilities":

- (1) Representatives of the two commands meet at Geneva and in the field.
- (2) These representatives "study the disposition of forces" to be made following a cease-fire, "beginning with the question of regrouping areas in Vietnam."
- (3) They report their findings and recommendations to the conference as soon as possible.

The date for their first meeting at Geneva was set for 1 June.

Moscow and Peiping immediately expressed satisfaction with this agreement as a first step. The Soviet radio observed that the conference had "passed its first milestone on the road to restoring peace in Indochina," and the Chinese radio alleged that the agreement "has aroused great satisfaction" in Geneva.

Communist Terms for a Cease-Fire

Communist terms for a cease-fire, which will presumably be forthcoming in the meetings which begin this week, are expected to be stiff.

They will almost certainly cite two phrases in the 29 May agreement--"early and simultaneous cessation of hostilities" and "beginning with the question of...Vietnam"--as a basis for continuing to insist that the cease-fire include arrangements for Laos and Cambodia.

Their proposals for Laos and Cambodia will almost certainly reflect the exaggerated claims made in the Chinese Communist map and in the Chinese and Viet Minh broadcasts of 25 and 27 May.

Even assuming that an agreement can be reached on this first question of "disposition of forces," the Communist position as expressed by Chou En-lai on 27 May shows that it would be hard to reach agreement on means for preventing military build-ups and for supervising and guaranteeing the truce.

The Question of a Political Settlement

While continuing to leave room for an armistice without a simultaneous political settlement, the Communists have by no means suggested they are prepared to accept a simple cease-fire and partition at this time. On the contrary, TASS observed on 28 May that discussions to date had been limited to military questions and repeated Molotov's statement of the first week of restricted sessions that "at least some" political problems must be connected with a cease-fire.

Similarly, a Viet Minh spokesman on 31 May stated that regroupment of forces would be only a "temporary measure" on the road to unification through "free and democratic elections," and concluded that "to talk about a cease-fire without relation to a political settlement would be putting the problem wrongly."

In the same vein, an East German correspondent on 31 May wrote that "there should be no illusions" that the Communists will give in to "any attempt at avoiding altogether the political buttressing of an armistice...."

Current Communist Position

The Communists almost certainly see their position at this time as a strong one. The Viet Minh military forces are expected to press their advantage this month, further weakening the French position in the negotiations and augmenting the territory the Communists can claim for their regroupment zones. The Communists seem to believe that the French government, committed to seek a settlement at Geneva, will either be forced toward the Communist position to get that settlement, whether at Geneva or in bilateral negotiations, or be succeeded by a government, during or after the Indochina debate in the National Assembly, which would accept worse terms.

The Communists almost surely do not regard internationalization of the Indochina war as imminent in the light of the conditions for American participation outlined by Secretary of State Dulles on 25 May: that the United States would not go in to defend colonialism, would not go in alone, and would not go in without the sanction of the United Nations and the United States Congress.

The Communists have prepared the ground for a smooth retreat if that course is forced on them.

They can withdraw from their current position--the inseparability of a military and a political settlement--to a second position in which they would work for a cease-fire alone, inasmuch as their cease-fire proposals amount to partition, itself a type of political settlement.

Finally, they can retreat from this second position--seeking a cease-fire and partition for Laos and Cambodia as well as for Vietnam--to a third position in which they would accept a cease-fire for Vietnam alone, putting the two ghost regimes of "Pathet Lao and Khmer" in the attic, from which they could later be extracted.

If faced with internationalization of the war, the Communists might retreat from the first position to the second and conceivably, but less probably, from the second to the third. They cannot be expected, however, to withdraw rapidly from one of these positions to another.

Vietnamese Position

The Vietnamese delegate has been quick to express opposition to any cease-fire plan which would result in partition. In agreeing to the amended British proposal of 29 May, he specified that the work of the representatives of the two commands should be guided by the principle that regrouping must not be detrimental to Vietnamese political and territorial unity. Noting that the Communist cease-fire proposal was generally regarded as amounting to partition, he said that even if such partition were called "provisional," the same had been true of the division of Korea.

Laotian and Cambodian Positions

The Laotian and Cambodian delegates accepted the 29 May proposal on the understanding that regrouping could be applied only to Vietnam. The Cambodian said he had no objection to a simultaneous cease-fire, provided arrangements were made for the withdrawal of foreign invaders (Viet Minh forces) from Cambodia. As no Cambodian representative would participate in the discussions between the two commands, he added that he reserved the right to contest any prejudicial recommendations.

French Position

French acceptance of the British proposal of 29 May--which by-passes the question of separating Laotian and Cambodian settlements from one for Vietnam--represents a withdrawal from the original French insistence on the removal of Viet Minh troops from Laos and Cambodia as a precondition for a cease-fire.

In the 29 May session, Bidault stated it was important for concrete discussions to begin at once and the French did not object to the British text, it being understood that the talks would begin on regrouping in Vietnam.

He observed that France would reserve its position on other problems, notably on the difference between the Vietnam problem on one hand and that of Laos and Cambodia on the other, and that other questions such as controls and guarantees would also have to be solved before any agreement could be considered valid.

He concluded that the military experts would work merely on behalf of the conference and their findings could not commit it without its explicit approval.

British Position

The British proposal of 29 May--for meetings of representatives of the two commands in Indochina--again illustrates Britain's willingness to utilize expedients in its effort to achieve a negotiated settlement at Geneva. Foreign Secretary Eden represented the British proposal as "an attempt to express a generally accepted view" as to how to set about ending hostilities in Indochina, "without anyone accepting at this stage undertakings they find impossible."

The British are not known to have indicated any reservations they might have about agreements reached under the terms of their proposal. They presumably have decided to express no position on the outline of a settlement until Communist intentions become clear in the course of the talks between the two commands.

Under Secretary Smith told Eden prior to the 29 May session that the United States would have to make its position clear on certain reservations of principle relating to the British proposal. When Smith raised the subject later in the session, both Eden and his aide, Lord Reading, parliamentary under

secretary of state for foreign affairs, gave, in Smith's words, "startling public exhibition of impatience and pique," including an irate aside by Reading, audible throughout the room, to the effect that the United Kingdom should withdraw its proposal.

An official in the French delegation at Geneva states that Eden is anxious to push forward at Geneva as rapidly as possible. Eden is said to regard the opening of talks this week between the military representatives as an appropriate time for him to return to London.

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FREE WORLD POLICIES AND OPINIONS

France

The French cabinet on 29 May approved "measures already taken or in the course of being carried out to reinforce the expeditionary corps in Indochina," according to an official communique. The cabinet also decided to call up immediately the 80,000 draftees who would normally have been called up in October. This will result in the induction within two to six weeks of 40,000 to 45,000 men who will be used to replace regulars and volunteers for service in Indochina, it is expected. Despite rumors that Marshal Juin has been offered the command of the Indochina forces, the government maintains that no decision has been taken on replacing Navarre.

The proposal adopted in the 29 May restricted session at Geneva calling for a meeting of the French Union and Viet Minh commands in Indochina to study the disposition of forces to be made upon the cessation of hostilities has aroused considerable optimism in the French press that a cease-fire will be arranged. The moderate daily Le Figaro stated that the step "carries the mark of compromise," and other papers from both extremes of the political spectrum believe a "cease-fire solution is now in sight."

The resignation of Marc Jacquet, secretary for the Associated States, and the refusal of the Gaullists to permit another of their deputies to replace him further emphasizes the split within the French cabinet on Indochina policy. As long as the Gaullists do not withdraw their other ministers from the cabinet, it seems clear they are incapable of a united effort to overthrow the government.

Jacquet, who wants an Indochina settlement at any cost, is now free to attack the government in the assembly, however, and may precipitate more violent criticism of the government's policy than was heard in the last two debates on Indochina.

In any event, Laniel is unlikely to face a vote until 8 June because the assembly will recess during the Communist Party's national congress from 3 to 7 June.

The Socialist congress on 29-30 May was careful to point out that its endorsement of EDC did not imply any change in Socialist opposition to the government's Indochina policy.

While the hope of a negotiated settlement at Geneva may still be sufficient to carry Laniel safely through the current debate, the next ten days will be extremely critical for both European and Southeast Asian aspects of French policy.

West Germany

The major concern of the West German press continues to be the apparent split between Great Britain and the United States over their Southeast Asian policies. While divided over the merits of the respective courses, the press universally cites a pressing need for Western unity at the Geneva conference.

The rightist-conservative press tends to support Eden's alleged "compromise" approach toward reaching an understanding with Molotov on Indochina, while the big independent dailies appear to voice sympathetic understanding for America's forceful efforts to maintain the balance of power in the Far East.

Despite fairly critical comments on American policy pronouncements at the time of Dien Bien Phu's collapse, the press in general has adopted a moderate tone in reporting American activities at Geneva for the last two months.

West German attitudes toward France continue to reflect lack of confidence.

Dismayed by the internal weakness of the French government and its "fumbling" colonial policies, the press appears to be reviving old charges against the "illegal" recruiting practices of the Foreign Legion.

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Australia and New Zealand

Re-election of the Menzies government on 29 May--even though it was returned with a reduced parliamentary majority--means there probably will be no break in the continuity of Australian policy. That policy is to work closely with the United States and Britain: first in a study of defense requirements for Southeast Asia; and second, to determine how to bring about the broadest collective security arrangement. The Australians stress the necessity of getting the support of Asian governments.

During the week, the New Zealand press treated American diplomacy regarding Southeast Asia rather roughly, contrasting the "wild statements" demanding "precipitate action" emanating from some American quarters to Britain's "appreciation of realities." Similarly, Secretary Dulles' "headlong approach" was compared with Eden's "patient diplomacy." Despite these outbursts, the conviction was apparent that any differences between Britain and the United States were matters of tactics, not of fundamentals.

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Representatives of both Australia and New Zealand will participate with those of the United States, Britain and France in the staff discussions on the defense of Southeast Asia opening in Washington on 3 June.

Egypt

Two officers high in the Nasr regime recently told a US embassy official that events in Southeast Asia are having strong repercussions in Egypt and that the tide of neutralist sentiment there is rising. They argued that this trend could be diverted only by positive action on the settlement of the Suez base issue and that further delay might force the regime "to seek alignment with Delhi and Djakarta."

India

India would almost certainly participate on a truce supervisory team, as suggested by Gromyko on 31 May, if also asked by the West. An indication of the lines along which New Delhi may be thinking was contained in a statement to Ambassador Allen on 24 May by N.R. Pillai, secretary general of the Foreign Ministry, who said a peace could be obtained by partitioning Indochina "somewhere between the 16th and 18th parallels."

At the same time, there were also indications of increasing Indian concern over Communist gains in Southeast Asia. This concern was attributed by New Delhi to three factors: the force of events; "gentle British coaxing;" and the views of the Colombo conference nations--especially Burma.

The acting head of the Indian UN delegation gave a cautiously cool response to the Thai move to bring the UN into the Indochina picture through a subcommittee of its Peace Observation Commission. He stated, however, that India favored the general principle of having the UN underwrite an Indochina settlement.

Pakistan

Karachi's current preoccupation with the East Bengal problem will probably prevent it from taking an active part in Indochina affairs for some time, according to the American embassy there.

Ceylon

The question of Ceylonese participation in an Indochina settlement is probably academic, according to the American ambassador in Colombo. The ambassador also questions whether Ceylon would agree under any circumstances to take part in a South Asian team headed by India.

Burma

Burma is apparently not yet prepared to abandon its neutral foreign policy in favor of collective action in Southeast Asia.

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The direction in which Burma's Socialist government is moving was, however, clearly indicated on 28 May by a resolution passed by the Asian Socialist Conference Bureau, in which leading Burmese officials exercise decisive influence. It called for a military truce in Indochina under the supervision of a UN-sponsored commission. The resolution also urged internationally

supervised free elections after the withdrawal of foreign troops, the reduction of belligerent armed forces, and the disarmament of guerrillas.

A press report earlier in the week stated that the Asian Socialists planned to dispatch a "fact-finding" mission to Indochina.

Growing Burmese sophistication regarding the Communist threat was also indicated by a report from Ambassador Sebald on 25 May that Burma would be unlikely to endorse any idea the Indonesians might have of promoting a multi-lateral nonaggression pact which would include Communist China, since Indonesia was regarded as weak and flirting dangerously with the Communists.

Indonesia

Prime Minister Ali, who spent several years as Indonesia's ambassador in Washington, told Ambassador Cumming in Djakarta on 26 May that American efforts to muster strength to deter Communist China's expansion "could only lead to war." The only solution lies in a modification of the American attitude toward Peiping which, if admitted to the United Nations, could be dealt with without danger of war, Ali said. He also tried to draw a parallel between the Indochina situation and Indonesia's experience with the Dutch and professed to see an analogy between Peiping's aid to the Viet Minh and the fact the Dutch used American weapons during the Indonesians' fight for independence.

Cumming believes Ali's "fuzzy thinking" might be troublesome if Indonesia should participate in guaranteeing any settlement reached at Geneva. The ambassador thinks Indonesia might join with India and Burma to help guarantee a settlement under certain conditions. He feels, however, it would not accept any invitation to do so that appeared to be a last-minute effort on the part of the Western powers to save their position by seeking South and Southeast Asian participation.

The Dutch foreign minister recently told the American ambassador in The Hague that the Indonesians have sent congratulatory messages to Ho Chi Minh. Ambassador Cumming reports that the chairman of the Indonesian Communist Party wired congratulations to Ho on the fall of Dien Bien Phu, but that neither he nor the French ambassador had knowledge of any other congratulatory messages from Indonesians to Ho.

Philippines

President Magsaysay sent his foreign affairs aide, Felino Neri, to the American embassy on 1 June to ask, as a matter of "prime importance," its support for a request that the Philippines be invited to join in the five-power staff discussions opening in Washington on 3 June.

Philippine participation was described as essential for defense planning, and for prestige purposes. Neri asserted that exclusion of the Philippines, which has long had close and open association with the West, would be regarded as a snub by its Asian neighbors. Moreover, local public opinion would look at the Philippines' exclusion as a move by the conference to draw the color line and as indicative that the Philippines was regarded as an inferior ally.

Neri said the Philippine position is that Thailand should also be included, but in any case, because President Magsaysay's prestige was at stake, the Philippines desired to take part even if it is to be the only Asian nation participating.

The Philippine request stems directly from Magsaysay's running fight with his ultranationalistic party colleague, Senator Recto. The president told an American embassy officer that a break with Recto was expected hourly and, referring to Neri's presentation, said that he badly needed immediate American support.

Speaking in the United States last week, Carlos Romulo, who is Magsaysay's personal envoy and on whom the president leans heavily for advice on foreign policy,

called on President Eisenhower to meet with Southeast Asian leaders to draw up a declaration similar to the Atlantic Charter. He described a guarantee that would enable Asians to enjoy the four freedoms as preferable to a military coalition against Communism.

The Manila press unanimously condemned the idea of partitioning Indochina. Several editorial writers saw such a move as a precedent for the division of Burma, Thailand, Indonesia, and "even the Philippines." French and British willingness to consider partition was deplored and American policy viewed as courageous and realistic.

Thailand

Thai officials were busy last week preparing their appeal to the United Nations. By not stressing the urgency of the situation, Thailand's appeal of 29 May appears to have overcome French and British fears that the move would in some way interfere with the discussions at Geneva.

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Japan

Deputy Prime Minister Ogata told a press conference on 24 May, in connection with Prime Minister Yoshida's forthcoming good-will tour, that the Communists will again become active in Japan if the situation in Asia deteriorates further. He warned that the Communist strategy will be influenced by the attitude and co-operation Japan receives from the free nations of the world.

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The Japanese press has dwelt mainly on the differences between American and British policy. While Eden labors to effect a compromise settlement of the Indochina and Korea problems, the United States is described as "leading the conference to rupture." Although the Communist side has received some favorable comment for offering a "compromise"--agreeing to neutral nations supervision of general elections in Indochina and Korea--most observers agree that the plan heavily favors the Communists.

South Korea

President Rhee informed Ambassador Briggs that reports from his emissary indicate sufficient interest to warrant rescheduling the Chinhae anti-Communist conference on 15 June. Foreign representation will include Indochina, Formosa, Philippines, Thailand, and, Rhee hoped, Burma, Ceylon, and Okinawa. Rhee will undoubtedly use this gathering of Southeast Asian nations to support his efforts to be included in the American-proposed collective action program in Southeast Asia.

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